

Just the Facts About ...

West Nile Virus & Stormwater Management

Due to heightened media attention regarding the potential of West Nile Virus to affect Montgomery County residents, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been receiving inquiries about the dangers that streams, wetlands, ponds, and stormwater facilities may pose as potential breeding areas for the Culex mosquito.

In fact, stormdrain systems are designed to quickly convey stormwater off site and into streams or stormwater facilities, and are typically not sources of standing water, unless damaged. Stream currents are usually too swift to serve as viable habitat for mosquito larvae.

Stormwater management ponds, farm ponds, and most man-made wetlands are generally designed to support some continuous water flow and provide habitat for many species of fish, frogs, bats, and birds that feed on mosquitoes and their larvae. The county has hundreds of these ponds in place, with little evidence and few complaints since the inception of the county's stormwater management program that they harbor excessive mosquito populations. In fact, of the sites visited by trained staff ecologists, no adult mosquitos have been observed in these ponds to date.

Furthermore, DEP, in cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), maintains a regularly updated website providing information about West Nile Virus, potential breeding areas for Culex pipiens (Northern House Mosquito), which can be a carrier for the virus, and explaining preventive actions individuals can take to eliminate prime potential mosquito breeding sites, such as clearing clogged rain gutters; covering buckets, containers, wading pools, and tires; and changing or flushing bird baths every few days.

DEP and DHHS are concerned about premature, excessive, or unnecessary applications of soluble pesticides which, while controlling the Culex mosquito, could have potentially toxic effects on other aquatic life and untargeted biological species, especially if applied improperly. If widespread spraying of pesticides were considered, County health officials may also have concerns about aerosols triggering respiratory reactions or other adverse effects among certain at-risk populations.

At present, we have no reason to think that stormwater management ponds in the county pose a great enough risk to warrant large scale pesticide application or dewatering actions, as some have suggested.

DEP will continue to work closely with other County, state, and regional public health and environmental agencies, and will provide further advisories as warranted. In addition, residents are encouraged to visit <http://mosquito.askdep.com> for regular updates on West Nile Virus, as well as information on preventive measures they can take to eliminate potential breeding sites and protect themselves from mosquito exposure.

If you have any additional questions, or to report stormwater facilities which you believe are not functioning properly, please call 240.777.7700. For additional assistance, see below:

Communicable Disease Program:
240.777.1755

Stagnant Water on Private
Property: 240.777.3600

Stormdrain Blockage:
240.777.7623

Used Tire Disposal:
240.777.6410

West Nile Virus Surveillance
Hotline: 1.866.866.CROW

Printed on 100% recycled paper, 20% post-consumer waste, 100% processed chlorine free.

For more information:



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askDEP.com
We've got answers!